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ABSTRACT

This manual for teachers and parents offers suggestions for helping 3- to 5-year-old children increase their leadership effectiveness. It is part of a series of similar guides developed by the RAPYHT Project (Retrieval and Acceleration of Promising Young Handicapped and Talented) for developing talents of both handicapped and nonhandicapped children. The manual focuses on increasing task achievement abilities and maintaining or increasing the ability to work with and lead others. Common characteristics of children with leadership talent are listed. Several general methods which can be used by teachers to stimulate leadership talent are recommended. Leadership goals and related activities are suggested. An annotated list of related readings is included. (Author/RH)

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Nurturing Leadership Talent In Early Childhood

Merle B. Karnes and Paula Sabatino Strong

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Leadership Talent in the Preschool Years	1
Common Characteristics of Children with Leadership Talent	3
General Methods to Stimulate Leadership Talent	6
Goal Areas and Activities	10
Annotated List of Resources	15

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It is our hope that the suggestions in this manual will help teachers more effectively nurture talent among their charges and in addition, will motivate them to develop other activities for fostering talent.

Merle B. Karnes, Director, RAPYHT Project
Paula Sabatino Strong, Teacher

FOREWORD

In the Fall of 1975 the Institute for Child Behavior and Development at the University of Illinois received a grant from the Federal Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (BEH) to develop and demonstrate a model program for the "Retrieval and Acceleration of Promising Young Handicapped and Talented" (RAPYHT). Children from three to five years of age were included in the project, which has completed the last year of a three-year demonstration cycle and is entering into the first year of outreach funding.

The principle goal of this project has been to develop and demonstrate an approach for educating young gifted talented handicapped children who are enrolled in programs that also serve gifted children with no handicaps, average children with no handicaps and multi-handicapped children who are of higher but not gifted ability. Since there are relatively small numbers of gifted handicapped children in any population, the approach has been to educate them in the mainstream, but, at the same time, provide them with special programming to meet the unique needs associated with giftedness and talent.

A major outcome of this three-year demonstration project has been the completion of a set of printed materials designed to aid classroom teachers and parents who desire to identify and encourage the development of the gifts and talents of young children, including those who are handicapped. This set of materials includes guides for screening, assessing and programming for children in the areas of intellectual, academic (reading, math, science), creative, leadership, visual and performing arts (art and music), and psychomotor talent. These materials are applicable for use with young gifted/talented children as well as those who are gifted/talented with handicaps. In fact, every child has a measure of talent which may go underdeveloped unless identified and nurtured. Therefore, we are convinced that careful observation and programming in talent areas is important for all children.

We are also committed to the premise that the earlier we identify and program for talents the greater the chances that the child will fully develop his true potential. Nationwide, there have been relatively few efforts devoted to identifying and programming for young gifted/talented and even less for the gifted/talented handicapped. Hopefully, the products developed by the RAPYHT Project will create more awareness of the need to identify and program for this neglected segment of our population.

Merle B. Karnes, Ed.D.
Director of RAPYHT Project

LEADERSHIP TALENT IN THE PRESCHOOL YEARS

Although leadership training is currently a popular topic, almost no recent literature is available concerning leadership and young children. Studies that have been done show that leadership traits in children resemble those in adult leaders. Some of these traits are sociability, self-confidence, sensitivity to others' feelings, persistance, organization, resourcefulness, enthusiasm, and bossiness. One researcher (Fu, 1977) also states that leadership abilities often emerge early, and they can be apparent as early as 8-10 months of age.

Leadership talent is not merely a set of characteristics which an individual possesses. Leadership is an active process, and every situation demanding leadership is different. Some children are leaders only under certain circumstances (at school, at home, on the playground, in the presence of adults, in the absence of adults, etc.) and some children are leaders of only certain groups of children (their own sex, their own race, a specific "clique," younger children, etc.). Other children are able to adapt their leadership skills to meet the requirements of many situations and the needs of many groups. (DeHaan, 1962; National/State Leadership Training Institute on the Gifted and the Talented, 1977).

Various studies point out that there are two main variables in any situation requiring leadership: 1) getting a job done (task leadership), and 2) keeping members of the group happy and cooperative (maintenance leadership). DeHann (1962) lists traits of each type of leadership.

Task Leader

1. Improves morale
2. Gets the group moving, initiates action, organizes
3. Knows how to get things done and shows others how
4. Gives orders, directs
5. Gets others to follow him/her

Maintenance Leader

1. Improves moral
2. Gets along with people
3. Listens to others' opinions and ideas, accepts majority opinion

There are many different leadership behaviors and styles. A leader may be helpful, authoritarian, participative, persuasive, diplomatic, etc. A child with leadership talent must have a wide range of leadership behaviors and must be able to apply the appropriate behaviors to each situation in order to accomplish the goals at hand and to maintain a feeling of satisfaction within the group.

Researchers agree that leadership is a trainable skill and that children with leadership talent can learn to increase their effectiveness as leaders (National/State Leadership Training Institute on the Gifted and the Talented, 1977; Stark, 1978). This talent guide offers suggestions for helping a child increase his/her leadership effectiveness by increasing task achievement abilities as well as maintaining or increasing his/her ability to work with and lead others.

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN WITH LEADERSHIP TALENT

The following are characteristics that children with leadership talent often display.

1. The child interacts easily with other children and adults, and he/she gets along with a wide variety of people. The child has mastered basic social skills and uses them to play cooperatively with others, takes turns during organized activities, shares with others, etc.

2. Other children join activities that the child is engaged in. He/she is liked by many other children and they frequently seek him/her out as a play and work companion.

3. The child is self-confident around others. He/she performs for the class during group activities by singing, performing in skits, telling jokes, etc. The child also participates actively in group discussions and offers his/her opinion freely.

4. The child often establishes the mood of a group. For example, he/she might generate contagious enthusiasm over a building project and have half the class busy making cardboard airplanes. On the other hand, the child may influence a group of children to refuse snack or act extremely wild during a dancing activity.

5. The child generally directs the other children he/she plays with. He/she organizes others effectively and they usually respond to his/her orders willingly. For example, he/she might tell other

children which dolls they can play with, or he/she might explain the rules of a game, or during an art activity the child might monitor the use of a limited number of scissors.

6. Other children often use the child as a resource by looking to him/her for suggestions, ideas or assistance. During dress up activities other children might copy his/her costume, e.g., if he/she dresses up like a monster, so do they. Another child might ask him/her to hold the cup while that child pours from a pitcher. During free play, others might look to the child to see what the "policeman" should do next.

7. The child is sensitive to the feelings and needs of others. He/she might comfort a crying child and try to console him/her. He/she may invite a child who has been excluded to join the group. The child usually listens to others when they address him/her, and he/she pays attention to the speaker during group discussions.

8. The child directs others effectively towards goals and uses the talents of each individual to accomplish the goal. For example, if the child decides to put on a skit, he/she might direct the more outspoken children to be performers and have the shy children arrange the props.

9. The child often shows others how to improve an activity. For instance, if several children are building horse corrals, he/she might direct them to make one large corral covering half the classroom floor.

10. The child generates many ideas and offers solutions to problems. For example, if the teacher asks the children to suggest field trip possibilities, the child might suggest three of four ideas. Or if several children are fighting over a toy, the child might suggest a way to share the object.

GENERAL METHODS TO STIMUIATE LEADERSHIP TALENT

Leadership does not happen by chance. In order to encourage leadership, you must make sure that there are opportunities for the child to practice his/her leadership skills. J. Olivero in A New Generation of Leadership (National/State Leadership Training Institute on the Gifted and Talented, 1977) suggest that the teacher offer many "total group" experiences such as class-prepared snacks, class-organized parties, and class-planned field trips. The teacher should assist with organization procedures, i.e., brainstorming ideas, making decisions, evaluating the outcome. But as much as possible, the teacher should back-off and let the children take on more responsibilities and leadership positions. The following are some suggestions to keep in mind when you encourage a child to develop leadership skills.

1. Verbally acknowledge the child's specific leadership talents. "You did a good job of making sure that everything was cleaned up." "I was glad to see that you included everyone in the game you were playing." "You made the new boy feel so welcome today. Thank you." If you acknowledge morally positive leadership, the child will be less likely to lead others in a negative direction, i.e., throwing rocks at the school building, destroying toys, bullying others.

2. Model desirable leadership behaviors. Show enthusiasm when you introduce an activity and follow through when you begin a project. Make sure that activities you present are well prepared and organized. Listen to the children and seriously consider their opinions. Be adaptable. For instance, if some unplanned event (a bird on the

windowsill) interrupts the schedule, follow the interests of the group and return to the activity at hand afterwards. Enforce classroom rules consistantly and obey them yourself when applicable.

3. Help the child learn to act as a cooperative member of a group and not always as the leader. In an organized situation (a field trip, snack preparation, a singing activity, etct.) you might assign others to perform leadership roles.

4. Encourage the child to listen to others and consider their needs. When the child is leading an activity, ask him/her questions such as, "What can Rudy do to help the group.?" "What would Lisa like to do." "What does Fran do best?"

5. Encourage the child to be more sensitive to the feelings of others. As situations evoking emotion arise in the classroom, encourage the children involved to tell each other how they feel. If a child will not verbalize his/her feelings, you might say, "Tell Sean that it hurts when he kicks you." or "Tell Lynette that you are angry because she took the ball from you." When a classmember is hurt or upset encourage the child to comfort him/her. You might ask the child, "Why is he/she crying? What could you do to make him/her feel better?" The child might pat him/her, obtain a Band-Aid, help him/her fix a broken toy, give him/her privacy, etc. Also encourage the upset child to verify whether the efforts of the assisting child were effective.

6. If the child organizes an activity, encourage him/her to see it through to the end. For example, if he/she directs others in a building project, you might encourage its completion by suggesting a special display area for the product. If a project has completely lost its appeal, let it end, but make sure that the child takes responsibility for clean-up also.

7. Encourage the child to think of new solutions to familiar problems. For example, if the child continually directs others to take turns with some tricycles, ask him/her, "How could you include everyone in the tricycle game?" The child might have the children without tricycles be "tricycle traffic directors," or he/she might suggest that two children ride on each tricycle--one on the seat and one standing on the back bar.

8. Encourage the child to be adaptable. You might present an activity to him/her and others without the proper or usual equipment. For instance, you might have them make collages without using paste or glue. They might tape, clip, fold together, pin or staple their project. If there aren't enough drums for a rhythm band, encourage the children to improvise and use objects in the classroom as drums. The child with leadership talent will often influence others to use his/her adaptive ideas.

9. Talk to the child's parents about his/her talent. Parents of children who show leadership abilities often nurture, approve, and recognize the child as an individual. They generally require the child to stand

on his/her own and make the child accountable for his/her actions. Explain to the parents what you are doing in class to promote the child's talent. Encourage them to further this talent at home with questions and comments that will encourage the child to lead others in positive ways. They should consciously promote maintenance leadership as well as task leadership (see introduction). "How could you include everyone when you play firefighter?" (maintenance); "I'm gald you let Mr. Young's granddaughter play with you. She doesn't know anyone here." (maintenance); "How could you keep your friends from running through the bushes?" (task); "Get everyone together and clean up the mess in the yard." (task).

GOAL AREAS AND ACTIVITIES

The following goals were adapted from concepts described in "Promoting Leadership," by J. Stark, 1978. Goals A through D concern maintenance leadership (dealing with people and the morale within a group). Goald E and F concern task leadership (accomplishing the goals at hand).

A. To lead others in a morally positive direction

1. Assign morally positive ways for the child to lead others. Have him/her:
   a. Monitor clean up and make sure that everyone does his/her share
   b. Lead an outdoor walk
   c. Organize several children in a performance for the class
   d. Set up and distribute snack
   e. Welcome a new child and be his/her guide for the first day.

2. Carry on a dilemma discussion. Show the child a picture depicting a situation which requires a moral decision. You might show him/her a picture of some children throwing stones at the side of a garage. Ask the child questions about the situation such as, "Why are the children doing that?" "How do they feel?" "What might happen if an adult sees them?" Encourage the child to generate several answers to each question. If you ask, "How do the children feel, he/she might say, "They might be mad at their mom, or maybe they're happy because they like to throw stones, or they might be scared that someone will tell on them." After you discuss the situation, ask the child

how he/she could lead others to do the morally right thing in that situation. For example, "You said that the children should stop throwing stones. How could you try to make your friends stop?" The child might say, "I could take all the stones away from them." or "I could just tell them to stop because it's my garage" or "I could think of something that's more fun to do."

B. To develop a leadership style

1. Give the child and two or three others some materials for a building or craft project. Tell the children to make something with the materials. Emphasize that everyone in the group should help and that the group can only make one product. After the project is completed, talk to them about the relations that were established within the group. You might ask, "How did you decide what to make?" "Was anyone the boss?" "Who did the most work?" "How did each of you know what to do?" "Who talked the most? the least?" "What did you talk about?" "Would you want to make anything together again?"

2. Give the child a leadership task such as directing a skit, or monitoring the use of a special toy, or leading a singing session. Afterwards talk with the child about his/her style. "How did you let the others know what to do?" "Did anyone argue with you? What did you do then?" "Did you like being the leader? Why? Why not?"

C. To increase communication skills

1. Arrange a "blind walk." Have the child pick a partner for this activity. Blindfold the child's partner and have the child lead

him/her through an obstacle course or through the classroom or school building. Afterwards talk with the child about how he/she communicated with his/her partner. "How did you tell him/her which way to go?" "How did he/she feel about being led around?" "Did he/she trust you?" "Did you hold his/her hand to lead him/her?"

2. Have the child and several others pantomime emotions for each other to guess. Encourage them to pantomime emotions other than happy and sad. They might pretend to be frightened, angry, surprised, excited, etc.

3. Take photographs of the child pantomiming various emotions. Help the child display the photos and label each of them. He/she may simply label each photograph with the name for the emotion or make up a story for each photo. "This boy is very scared because he has to go upstairs to get his shoes and it's dark up there."

4. Have the child lead an activity without talking. He/she might lead an outdoor walk, clean-up time or a game such as "Simon Says." Explain to the group that no one should talk during the activity. Afterwards talk with the child about how he/she communicated with the others without talking. "How did you let them know what to do?" "Did they understand you?", etc.

5. Have the child give you directions over a toy telephone. You might ask him/her how to get from school to his/her house, or how to get from his/her house to the store, or how to get to the playground, etc.

D. To increase problem solving skills in social situations

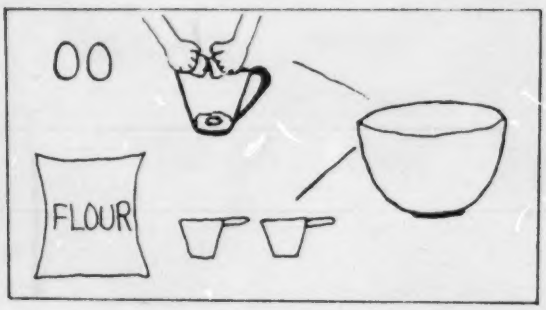
1. Implement a "three before me" rule in the classroom. Whenever a problem situation occurs, encourage the child involved to ask three peers for resolution ideas before turning to an adult. In this way the child will learn to give and seek help and advice and resolve problems with less adult intervention.

2. When a problem arises, use the following procedure with the child to arrive at a resolution.
   a. Get the facts and define the problem.
   b. Brainstorm ideas. Have the child think of several solutions.
   c. Decide the best solution.
   d. Test the solution.

3. Discuss classroom problems with the children. These problems might include running in the classroom, wasting paper or other supplies, clean-up problems, sharing popular toys, screaming indoors, etc. Explain to the children why the matter at hand is a problem and use the above procedure to decide on a group resolution.

E. To increase organizing skills

1. Have the child and two or three others bake something together. Do not assign jobs. Just give the children a pictorial recipe that they can use without your assistance.



Let them organize themselves, but encourage the children to include every group member in the action. "What can Sheri do?" "Did everyone get a chance to do something?"

2. Have the child teach others how to play a game. This might be a game that you have taught him/her or one that he/she has made up. Make sure that the child knows how to play the game very well beforehand.

3. Have the child make up a new class schedule and actually implement that schedule for one day. He/she might rearrange the order of activities, add some activities and omit others. Have him/her arrange pictures in sequential order or draw them to show the new schedule.

ANNOTATED LIST OF RESOURCES

1. Arthur, B. and Berg, L. and Walker, A. About leadership (RAPYHT Project). Unpublished manuscript, University of Illinois, Institute for Child Behavior and Development.

This manuscript describes traits of young leaders, discusses maintenance and task leadership, and talks about the necessity for a leader to be adaptable. It includes a checklist for identifying children who have leadership abilities and gives numerous examples for each item on the checklist.

2. Berger, T. I have feelings. Behavioral Publications Inc., 1971.

This book describes seventeen feelings, the circumstances that evoke each feeling, and an explanation of the feelings. The vivid photographic illustrations and the realistic narration contribute to the effectiveness of this book. A review committee consists of specialists in child development: Leonard S. Blackman of Teachers College, Columbia University; Eli M. Bower, E.D. National Institute of Mental Health; Gerald Caplan, M.D., Harvard Medical School; and Sheldon H. Roen, Ph.D., Teachers College Columbia University. Joan Fassler also wrote a series of books concerning psychological themes that were reviewed by this committee, entitled: All Alone With Daddy; The Man of the House; One Little Girl; My Grandpa Died Today; The Boy With a Problem; Don't Worry Dear.

3. Berkey, M. D., and Berkey, V. A. The mind is a funny thing. Minneapolis, Minnesota: T. S. Denison & Company, 1973.

This book is well illustrated with colorful detail which children will enjoy examining while their teacher reads the text to them. The book explains what various causes of emotion might be, and how children express their feelings. The text is interesting and intelligible to the preschool child.

4. DeHaan, R. A study of leadership in school age children: Cooperative Research Project No. 697. Holland, Michigan: Hope College, 1962.

This report concerns mainly older children (upper elementary and high school age), but the introduction includes leadership theories and behavioral descriptors which apply to all ages. The text also contains definitions of leadership by children as young as five-years-old which help clarify what young children value in a leader.

5. Fu, V. R. A nursery school leadership observation schedule and a nursery school leadership rating scale. Blacksburg, Virginia: Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 1977.

This is a report on a study which attempted to establish a rating scale for leadership abilities of preschool children. The report includes summaries of previous leadership studies and it lists many characteristics of preschool leaders. The scale may be useful for anyone who wishes to do an in-depth rating of leadership among a group of young children.

6. National/State Leadership Training Institute on the Gifted and the Talented. A new generation of leadership. Los Angeles, California, 1977.

This brief is made up of a series of articles by various educators and social service professionals covering such topics as identification of children with leadership talent, specific leadership programs, goals for a leadership program, and creative leadership. This booklet covers the topic of leadership very thoroughly, however there is a limited amount of information which relates directly to preschool-age children.

7. Silberman, L. Allender, S., and Yanoff, B. Real learning: A sourcebook for teachers. Boston, Massachusetts: Little, Brown, and Company, 1976.

Real Learning truly deserves it's name "sourcebook." It is a book of readings and practical suggestions for any classroom teacher with contributions from specialists in education including David Hawkins, George Isaac Brown, John Dewey, and John Holt. Chapter three is devoted to emotional growth; chapter four deals with working in groups. These sections are particularly useful in affective education.

8. Stark, J. B. "Promoting leadership." Early Years. February, 1978, 8 (6), 12-13.

This article offers some extremely practical suggestions for helping a young child who has leadership talent. The author suggests several traits which indicate leadership potential, and she outlines five goal areas for training a child in leadership. She emphasizes that leadership is a trainable skill even at young ages.

9. Steinberg, M. Emotional growth in the classroom: Implementing affective education through the process of confluency. Almgvist, and Wiksell International, Stockholm, Sweden, 1976.

This is a doctoral thesis written by John M. Steinberg of the Department of Educational Research, School of Education, Uppsala University. He identifies goal areas in affective education; he recommends activities for affective growth related to the identified goal areas; he has designed a curriculum, instructional guidelines, accompanied by instructional materials for application of his theory to affective education; and he discusses research in affective education. Though written as a doctoral thesis the classroom teacher will find it very readable and useful. Mr. Steinberg has thoroughly reviewed the literature in this area, and his thesis is substantially based in that research.